



STATE OF WASHINGTON

WASHINGTON WORKFIRST

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December 10, 2004

TO: All WorkFirst Staff  
WorkFirst Service Providers

FROM: WorkFirst Sub 3 Members

SUBJECT: Job Preparation (JP) Component Implementation

For some time, the WorkFirst partner agencies have been working together to plan a service delivery model to enhance the Targeted Wage Initiative(TWI) and improve services to parents. The Job Preparation (JP) component, and its corresponding services, is being planned to do the following:

- Improve parent engagement in job search, CJST, Community Jobs and other approved activities.
- Increase parents' understanding of the importance of showing up to work on-time, everyday, ready to work and with back-up plans for transportation and child care.
- Enhance Employment Security's Work Skill Assessment process to make it increasingly valuable for parents and staff, thus improving the Targeted Job Search efforts.
- Improve attendance in short-term job skills training as part of TWI.
- Enhance activities available for parents who are coming out of "X" activities and need to begin job search preparation.
- Ensure data integrity for federal reporting by making program adjustments that reflect TWI activities implemented in September 2003.

The program is moving to implement the JP component and the resulting improvements to the program. The final draft of the JP proposal is attached. This proposal reflects a tremendous amount of input from local area staff from all of the partner agencies and service providers. Thank you very much for providing excellent consideration and comments. Your input has been meaningful and valuable, and is appreciated.

When JP is implemented, it will further enhance the Targeted Wage Initiative that has been very successful in improving the income of WorkFirst parents. The statewide average wage at job entry has increased from \$8.50/hour to \$8.88/hour from September of 2003 to present, and 68% of the

parents who go to work enter full-time employment. Allowing for an increase in the minimum wage and the slowness of recovery of the state's economy, this is an outstanding accomplishment.

The JP implementation, however, will not occur for several months due to the time needed to make the changes to the automated systems, policy revisions and so on. Specific dates will be set, along with plans for rolling out the changes, all of which you will be hearing about as decisions are made.

There are some things that all of us can do in the meantime, to prepare for JP implementation that would be enhancements to the Targeted Wage Initiative.

- There are efforts going on in several local areas in preparation for JP that enhance the up-front activities, such as an increase in life/soft skills training offered and available for parents. This is a great enhancement to WorkFirst and TWI, and is encouraged to continue.
- Engaging Customers Across Generations training is being scheduled for local staff. This training is designed to improve up-front and on-going engagement with parents in the activities in which they participate.
- Additional training is being developed to improve the up-front activities including the job search orientation, Work Skill Assessment process, and success planning for parents coming into job search/preparation.
- Local area staff are encouraged to start or continue working together to determine strategies to reduce the rate of referrals back to DSHS for non-participation. Early interventions can keep parents engaged and moving forward while reducing the number of sanctions. Staff should also collaborate on how to jointly reinforce the standards for participation, such as attendance, punctuality and dress.
- The TWI model of getting parents to job search activities as soon as possible should be emphasized. This will increase the number of referrals to training options and Community Jobs, as well as positively affecting the number of parents obtaining employment.
- In addition, local staff should work to close the gap between the number of parents referred to job search and the numbers that actually get engaged in job search activities.

Since the beginning of the WorkFirst Program in 1997, more than 146,000 families have gone off of welfare with employment and stayed off. It is because of the work you do. The work you do everyday, face to face with TANF parents, to assist them address barriers, help them find work, provide training that can enhance their careers, and to give them a hand up when they need it is as important as any work done anywhere. Thank you and congratulations to you all!

Attachment

# **Job Preparation Component TWI Improvement Proposal Final Draft (September 20, 2004)**

## **Background**

The WorkFirst partnership is working together to improve:

- Customer engagement in job search, CJST, Community Jobs and other approved activities, and reduce RBs for non-participation from all WorkFirst activities.
- Parents' understanding of the importance of showing up to work on-time, everyday, ready to work and with back-up plans for transportation and child care.
- Employment Security's Work Skill Assessment process to make it increasingly valuable for parents and staff, thus improving the targeted job search efforts.
- Attendance in short-term job skills training as part of TWI
- Activities for parents who are coming out of "X" activities and need to begin job search preparation.
- The program's federal reporting.

**The proposal does not change or replace the TWI initiative, nor does it change existing policy**, except where indicated in the proposal. Policy about sanctions, referrals to training, referrals to job search and all other WorkFirst policy stays the same, except in those areas indicated in the JP proposal. As in current policy, the labor market remains the test for employability for WorkFirst parents.

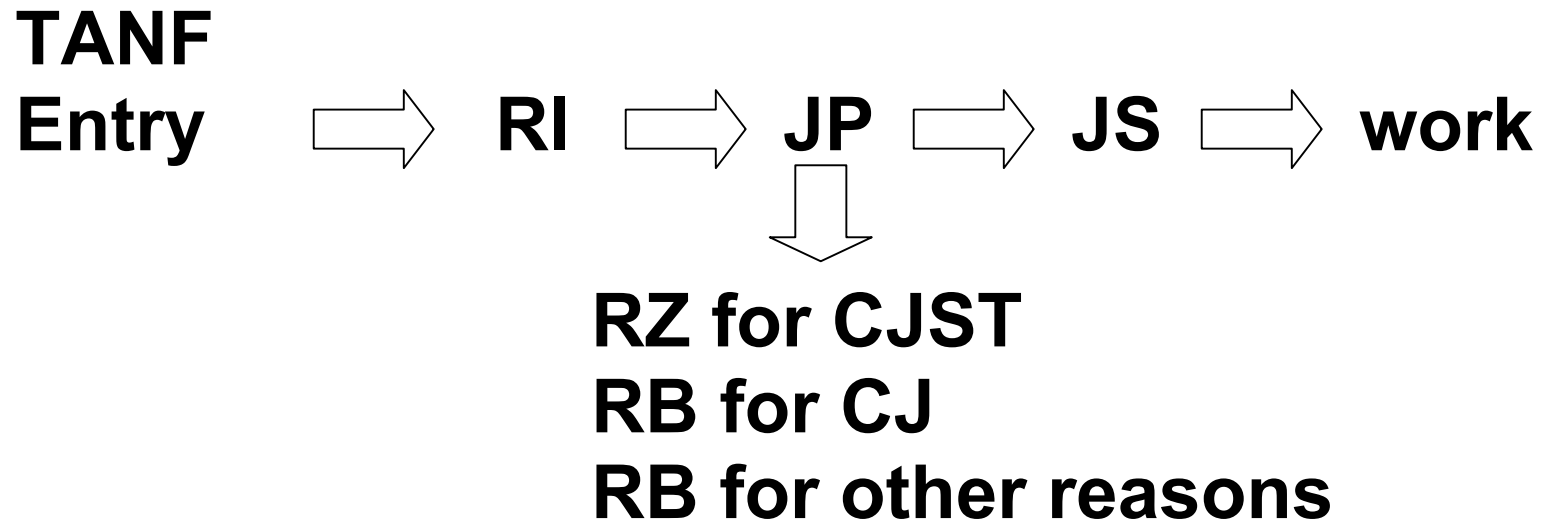
## **Goals:**

1. Get as many appropriate parents to the job preparation track as possible.
2. Keep referred parents engaged in activities.
3. Quickly re-engage parents who "disengage."
4. Assist parents make smooth transitions from the job preparation track to their next activities or to employment.

## **Proposal**

The program design could be improved by adding a **Job search preparation (JP)** component between the RI (referral to job search) and JS (job search), or other activities. During this period, after an orientation session, parents would be immediately immersed in activities designed to help them stay engaged in activities and build the skills to progress toward employment.

## Basic Client Flow Through the Job Search Track



## Job Preparation Roles and Responsibilities:

- **The basic premise of JP is to reduce the number of RBs before they happen** by intervening and strengthening parent engagement. This will benefit all of the partner agencies and their programs. All of the WorkFirst partners play a very important role in making JP work as planned.

DSHS	ESD	Colleges	CTED/CJ	Other Contractors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment Centered Case Management</li> <li>• Ensuring childcare and transportation plans are in place</li> <li>• Referrals to JP</li> <li>• Interventions to reduce RBs</li> <li>• Increase participation and progress of parents</li> <li>• Referrals to CJ, when appropriate coming back from JP</li> <li>• Building IRPs with basic skills combined with work activities</li> <li>• Enforce the sanction policy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct work skills assessment               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Job Skills</li> <li>2. Work Values</li> <li>3. Work Interests</li> </ol> </li> <li>• Facilitate the job search competency completion               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Resume writing</li> <li>2. Master Application</li> <li>3. Labor Market Info</li> <li>4. Interviewing</li> <li>5. 60 second comm..</li> </ol> </li> <li>• Do success planning with parent</li> <li>• Interventions to decrease RBs</li> <li>• Increase participation and progress of parent</li> <li>• Monitor progress of parent</li> <li>• Conduct the JP evaluation and decide referrals to JS, CJST, DSHS for CJ, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide soft skill/life skill training where feasible</li> <li>• Conduct CASAS/basic skills testing where feasible</li> <li>• Participate in workshops to explain CJST and recruit</li> <li>• Provide other short-term job skills training</li> <li>• Monitor and report progress and attendance in short-term training</li> <li>• Accept RZ referrals and determine if parent is appropriate for training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interventions to reduce RBs</li> <li>• Increase participation and progress of parents</li> <li>• Provide part or all of the week of soft skill/life skills training if appropriate to the local partnership</li> <li>• Combine basic skills with work activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide soft skill/life skills training when appropriate to the local partnership</li> <li>• Provide other services needed by parents to enhance their employability</li> </ul>

**TANF Entry:** DSHS workers determine eligibility and provide employment centered case management. This includes responsibility to provide an orientation to the job search track, including job preparation and the elements that are provided. The DSHS worker begins building the relationship with the parent that is the foundation for successful engagement and participation.

- TANF applicants can be referred to job preparation activities, as they are currently referred to job search.
- Returners will be referred to job preparation activities, as they currently are referred to job search.
- Currently, only working parents can be referred to 1/4 time job search. In this proposal, parents in part-time “X” components can be referred to JP part-time, including 3/4 time “X” parents who are within 30 days of completion of the “X” activities. Parents in 3/4 time “X” components who do not have a predictable time frame to be able to tell if they are within 30 days of completion will not be referred to JP until they have completed their “X” activities.

**RI referral:** DSHS workers refer parents to the ESD Job Search track by using the RI component code. The parents must have childcare and transportation plans in place before they enter JP. The length of the RI is up to seven days, which can be extended to 14 days if necessary. The RI will automatically be converted into a JP component when the parent signs into the CATS.

**JP (Job Preparation):** Parents enter the JP component through the RI. CATS will screen for full-time and part-time participation with other components as it does now in JS. Part-time or full-time participants can be referred to job search.

- Job Preparation will last up to four weeks, but does not have to last four weeks if the parent completes the required activities or is ready to move into different activities. JP activities include the following. Most of the activities listed below are currently part of the Job Search component, and will continue to be performed by ESD staff. An asterisk indicates required activities:
  - Orientation to job preparation\*
  - Work Skill Assessment\*
  - CASAS/Basic Skills Assessment
  - Job Search Competency completion\*
  - Labor Market research\*

- Success Planning\*
  - Life Skills/Soft Skills training
- ESD workers conduct a JP evaluation, which is the decision point for determining what activities the parent engages in next. Most will go into job search, but ESD can refer parents back to DSHS for other services, such as CJ, if it is apparent that the job search track is not appropriate or they need different or more intensive services.
- The JP evaluation can be done at any time during the JP component to direct parents to CJST, CJ, job search or other approvable activities. The policy for referring parents to other activities out of job search has not changed except that JP should improve the process.
- Parents do not move into JS until the JP component requirements, including the job search competency standards, have been completed, and their participation in JP indicates they are ready to move forward.
- At any time during JP, parents have access to support services.
- At the initial JP evaluation point, after a parent has participated in four weeks of JP, he or she can be assigned to one additional stint in JP for up to four weeks, if it determined that the parent needs more time in JP to complete his or her competencies and so on.
- After 8 consecutive weeks in JP, meaning two complete rounds of full-time participation in JP (not just “seat time,”) if a parent is not ready to move on to JS, an intervention must occur. DSHS and ESD staff should consider what services or activities the parent who is participating but not moving forward needs in order to be able to get to JS.
- There are no restrictions on the number of times a parent can be referred to JP, but local staff must use sound judgment to make sure parents are making progress and are in the appropriate approvable activities. The concept is to address the churning between DSHS and ESD up front in JP rather than when they have been referred to other activities. This could mean a parent enters JP two or three times before becoming solidly engaged and progressing. **(See the second bullet under Referrals Back to DSHS below.)**

**Job Search:** Parents will enter JS after completion of the JP activities. JS will last up to eight weeks.

- The parent can be referred for an additional eight weeks of job search upon the recommendation of the ESD worker, and after DSHS conducts an evaluation to determine that additional JS is the appropriate activity.

- Job search policies about TWI activities will remain the same as they are currently. Standards around the Work Skill Assessment, job search competencies, success planning, targeted wage referrals and so on will remain the same. (To strengthen services, ESD is purchasing or developing training for staff including Engaging Customers – in an age relevant way- and training on conducting effective Work Skills Assessment, and tying the results of labor market research to success planning and job search.)
- ESD will continue to serve full-time participant, part-time employed parents, and others who are referred currently to job search, but the up-front point of entry will be Job Preparation. Locally, ESD staff serve part-time working parents to help them find better jobs, as well.

**Referrals Back to DSHS:** There are four types of RBs. (1. Automatic RB due to two no-shows. 2. Manual RB due to not meeting the participation requirements. 3. Manual RB because the parent needs other services. 4. Automatic referral back to DSHS after 8 weeks in job search.)

- Prior to a parent being RB'd manually for non-participation, DSHS and ESD staff should work together to try to keep the parent engaged in activities, thus avoiding the RB entirely.
- After being RB'd automatically for no-shows twice, local DSHS and ESD staff would collaborate to stop the “bouncing” effect (RB/JP/RB/JP.) Local staff would strategize ahead of time to reduce RB's and to intervene on the cases that look like they are potentials to become a cyclical referral back and forth. Strategies could include case staffings and other means to work with these parents to engage them in activities.
- CATS will be programmed to require the parent to talk with an ESD worker after one no-show prior to being able to sign into CATS. DSHS and ESD staff will strategize locally to determine the best intervention at this point. For example, the parent may be required to speak with the DSHS worker as an intervention.
- The new job search track, including JP, will not change sanction policy. When parents are referred back to DSHS for non-participation, staff will follow current policy for establishing good cause, including for not calling in to get an excused absence, and begin the sanction process when appropriate. Local staff should strategize how they can avoid cases getting to the sanction stage before it occurs, but once non-participation has happened, the sanction policy will be followed.
- If a parent is RBd out of JS for non-participation, and the DSHS worker determines that he or she should return to the job search track, the parent will be referred again to ESD via the RI referral. The ESD worker will then evaluate the need for additional JP activities, since the parent RBd out of JS. When the parent is



ready to move on to JS, the ESD worker will complete the JP evaluation and move the parent into the next level of activities.

### **One Week Life Skills Training**

The up front life skills training model is based on a best practice that shows a decrease in the number of people who drop out of services voluntarily. While life skills training is strongly encouraged and endorsed as a statewide strategy to improve parent engagement in activities, it may not be feasible in all areas. In as many areas as possible, life skills training should be an option for parents. Local partners will address the issue, leverage resources and offer the training if possible.

- The life skills training is not intended to completely address and resolve a family's issues. It is intended to be an up-front introduction that helps prepare a parent to participate in activities effectively.
- The life skills training would be provided by the local community college, or by contractor, including Community Jobs contractors if this is what fits in a local community.
- Ideally, the life skills training would be available for one week, or 30 hours, and the parents would enter the life skills training on their first full day of participation. In practice, the requirements of the life skills training would be negotiated and implemented office by office, with the intention of getting as close to the ideal as possible.
- The life skills training is not intended to duplicate services that are already being provided by the program in other areas, such as resume writing or basic skills education. It is intended to focus on those areas that can affect a parent's ability to make good choices about participating, and ultimately, keeping a job.
- Some of the topics the training could include are:
  - Self-awareness
  - Attitude
  - Balancing work and personal life
  - Money management
  - Stress and anger management
  - Time management
  - Communication skills
  - Appropriate standards for dress and participation

- The standards for participation regarding dress, attendance, punctuality and so on would be adhered to and reinforced as requirements for participation.

### **CASAS/Basic Skills Testing**

As part of the up front activities associated with JP, CASAS/Basic Skills testing is offered where feasible. The community or technical colleges will have the lead in administering and scoring the basic skills tests. As with the life skills training, it is strongly encouraged that offices provide this service, but it might not be feasible in all areas.

- The local staff will need to work together to leverage the resources needed to be able to provide the service, and to define how, when and where the testing will be provided.
- Ideally, the CASAS tests will be conducted on-site at the ESD office and will take place about the same time the Work Skills Assessment is taking place, or within the first two weeks of JP participation. The information obtained from the basic skills tests can help local staff and parents as they target job search prospects, and conduct their success planning exercises.
- The basic skills tests will not be used as a tool to screen parents out of job search activities. As in current policy, the labor market remains the test for employability for WorkFirst parents.
- The results of the testing can be used to help staff combine work activities and basic skills for those who score low, and to address the issue as part of the parent's job search plan. WorkFirst policy, that allows basic skills education or GED completion combined with work, work experience, CJ, job search, OJT and other work activities, is not changed.

## **Local Implementation (Details must still be worked out)**

Local WorkFirst offices will be required to submit a plan for implementation that will address, at a minimum:

- Strategies to fully engage parents in activities
- Strategies for incorporating life skills training into the job search track (JP)
- How will offices ensure that parents attend life skills classes and other short-term training?
- Strategies to conduct interventions prior to manual RBs for non-participation or after two automatic RBs for non-participation and other key times.
- How will local offices ensure parents are fully prepared to enter job search?
- How will offices ensure that JP does not become a “holding place” for parents?
- How will offices ensure that JP represents full-time activities for the time parents are engaged in them?
- What will the process be when the parent gets a message after one no-show that he or she needs to talk with a worker?
- How will CASAS/basic skills testing be offered and administered in this office?
- Strategies for case staffings, working together to reduce RBs, improving lines of communication, jointly enforcing participation and dress standards, and other ways the local partners plan to improve parent engagement.